

American Opinion Summary

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PRESIDENT'S BROADCAST ON CUBA

The President's address on Cuban policy draws wide support. Press comment supports it. "Businessmen across the U.S. generally supported President Kennedy's quarantine on all shipments of offensive military equipment to Cuba," the Wall Street Journal reports. The President "has the complete unstinting support of America's organized workers," according to AFL-CIO President George Meany.

Political leaders of both parties are reported as expressing support (e.g. former Presidents Truman and Hoover, Richard Nixon). Senator Mansfield told reporters that "the unanimous reaction of the combined leadership [of Congress] was to fully support the President." Sen. Goldwater (R-Ariz.) and Rep. William H. Miller (R-N.Y.) held that the President's action was right, but belated. Sen. Scott (R-Pa.), holding that the President is "several months" late, asserted that nothing he said "will remove 5,000 Russians and a half million tons of military supplies from Cuba."

The President took the course he had to take, some editors suggest. As the Baltimore Sun puts it, "the Soviet Union left us no choice." The Washington Post says the President "has made the inevitable response" to the Soviet preparation of missile sites in Cuba. The Philadelphia Inquirer concludes that the U.S. "is setting to save the peace while there is yet time for saving."

His actions are considered relatively restrained. "It is action not so drastic as many Americans would like to take," the New York Times comments, "but in our view it is drastic enough at the present time." The New York Herald Tribune characterizes it as "a minimal program for the defense of the Americas." The Washington Post says: "The actions outlined by the President are not extreme....Taken as a whole, the President's speech was not bellicose."

The seriousness of the President's move and its dangerous potential are recognized. The cold war has entered a new phase, "in which cautious maneuvering by the two huge nuclear powers is displaced by swift gambling for great stakes," a Wall Street Journal reporter writes. This reporter and Warren Rogers, Jr. (in N.Y. Herald Tribune) suggest that what happens next depends upon whether or not Khrushchev is willing to accept the loss of face involved in stopping the flow of materials to Cuba.

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KEENE'S BROADCAST ON CUBA
(Cuba.)

The speech is characterized by some commentators as tough [e.g. Kyle Wilson and Rick Bragg (UPI), Roy Scherer (NBC)]. Wilson says that it takes the issue of Kennedy "indecisiveness" out of the political campaign.

The essence of the speech, according to Chalmers Roberts, was that the U.S. "will not act idly by" taking the equivalent of Wilson's march into the Rhineland. "The thrust will be not how to avoid war, war will be risked" (in Wash. Post).

Recognition that the quarantine could have serious consequences is also reflected in editorial comment. "Any attempt of search and seizure on the high seas could create immense complications," the Philadelphia Inquirer warns. The New York Times says that "the quarantine" is "a major step of the utmost gravity; and the American public must not be deluded into thinking that it could not have the most serious consequences." The Washington Post asserts that if "calamity" should follow the quarantine, "the responsibility will not lie upon these shores." The Washington Star warns that "we must be ready to face a future filled high with peril," but adds that Khrushchev must, too.

The quarantine "must be regarded as an act of war," according to Scripps-Howard's Washington News; but "it is a preventive course best calculated to forestall large-scale hostilities."

Some speculative questioning about the timing of the President's address was raised by the Wall Street Journal and David Lawrence. More bluntly, Arthur Muck asserts that "the timing...was a contrivance of political and public relations art." He concludes that "these remain legitimate issues between the Administration and its Cuban policy critics."

Scripps-Howard's Peter Edson asserts that editors and newscasters attending a recent State Department briefing session were told nothing of the ominous developments in Cuba and were left "completely misinformed." "This experience," he concludes, "could well lead to discontinuance of all such mass indoctrination sessions in the future."